

Dynamic Handouts Are Vital to Your Success

Do you question the value of putting time and energy into creating handouts for your meetings and presentations? If you generally throw something together at the last minute, or just run off a few pages on the copier, it's obvious you don't realize how vital handouts are to your success.

- ✓ Having information in front of your listeners helps them **stay focused on what you are saying rather than on trying to scribble out notes.**
- ✓ Many people **grasp ideas faster and recall them more accurately** if they are able to both read and listen to a message.
- ✓ Your handouts can **provide the justification and facts that your audience members need to sell your idea** to their associates and managers at their company.
- ✓ Handouts with background or supporting information can help your audience **“fill-in gaps” in their knowledge and understanding of your topic**, thereby helping their comprehension of your message.
- ✓ A polished handout is great for your image and career! If the material is well organized and accurate, it will **add to your creditability.** If the cover and package look professional, so will you.
- ✓ A handout (along with an agenda) will help you **keep everyone focused on YOUR subject**, especially if the topic is a bit controversial or if you have a few disruptive comments from the audience.
- ✓ Professional looking handouts are like advertising pieces that help **showcase your company, service, product and YOU!** Each time the audience members handle your handout later, they will be reminded of you, your company and your message.

Ten Tips to Make'em Better

1. **Introduce yourself...** include in your handouts an overview of your company and if applicable, bios for the key people operating your company. Remember, it's always easier to do business with a company or person that you feel you know.
2. Many training programs for speakers advocate that you begin your speech by telling your audience “what you are going to tell them”. This advice is worth heeding for handouts, too. **On the cover or first inside page, provide a brief (20 to 30-word) statement that sums up the objectives** of your message. Even if your audience remembers nothing else, the prominence of this statement will likely make it stick.

3. If the time you've been allotted to speak to your audience is less than what you need to fully explain yourself, then don't try to jam it all in. Presenting facts and data too fast and furious will only numb the audience and make you look ridiculous. Instead, **cover the key points and offer the back-up information** "in your handouts" as evidence.
4. **Handouts can be the perfect "audience leveler"**, providing back-up data needed to help the novice understand your product, service or idea. Include a "backgrounder" if you suspect your audience will include a mix of people at different levels of understanding. Backgrounders can also help your audience members "explain" your concept to others in their organization.
5. **It's hard to forget your message (or you) if a handout gets carried back to the listener's office.** The key is to make sure it doesn't get lost once it arrives. The use of strong colors, bold headlines, legible spine copy and meaningful graphics can help tremendously.
6. If the attendees are traveling by plane, **offer to send their handouts back to their office for them.** They'll not only appreciate you for lightening their load, you'll have a chance to drop in a quick thank-you or a note that addresses an issue that was brought up during the meeting.
7. Be sure to **include your name and contact information** in an easy-to-find spot on your handout to make it convenient to reach you if an audience member has questions or needs additional information. Best spot: **THE FRONT COVER.**
8. If you have a web site that **provides valuable information** to support your mission, then be certain to note it prominently on and in your handout.
9. Invite your audience to **jot down their own** ideas and notes by providing extra wide margins, or even an area with blank lines under the heading **"NOTES"**.
10. **Handouts should be a summary of your verbal presentation** with supporting facts and data. Don't include everything you are going to say, or your audience will be tempted to read your message instead of listening to you deliver it.

This article was found at: <http://www.cardinalbrands.com/support/handouts/handout.htm>